

Claims

Sub A2

1. A system for conducting product configuration research at computer systems over a network for a product having multiple features and for each feature a plurality of possibly subfeatures, said system comprising:

at least one first computer system connected to said network;

at least one second computer system capable of connecting to said first computer system through said network;

said first computer system sending an executable program via said network to said second computer system;

said program being executed by said second computer system and comprising:

means for enabling a respondent at the second computer system to configure the product by selecting at least one subfeature for each of the features of the product, and allowing the selected subfeatures to be changed by the respondent until the product is configured with final ones of the selected subfeatures, in which each of the possible subfeatures of the features of the product has a price value;

means for determining a total price value of the product in accordance with the price value of the selected subfeature for each of the features of the product as the respondent selects or changes the selection of the subfeatures for each of the features of the product, and displaying said total price value;

means for determining the time for the respondent to configure the product with the final ones of said selected subfeature for each of the features of the product; and

means for sending configuration information to the first computer system when the respondent has configured the product having at least the final selected subfeatures for the features of the product, all selected subfeatures for the features of the product until the final ones of the selected subfeatures, and said determined time; and

said first computer system having means for storing said configuration information received from said second computer system.

Sub B1

2. The system according to Claim 1 wherein said first computer system sends a survey having questions to said second computer system associated with said sent executable program, and said first computer system further comprises means for enabling the respondent to

answer said questions and to send answers to said questions to said first computer system over the network.

3. The system according to Claim 1 wherein certain of the subfeatures when selected for the features of the product represent a conflict with said selected subfeatures for other features of the product, and said program further comprises means for informing the respondent of said second computer system when said selected subfeature represent said conflict, and means for resetting the respondent selection of the subfeature causing the conflict to avoid the conflict.

4. The system according to Claim 1 wherein each of the possible subfeatures for each of the features represent an attribute or level of the feature.

5. The system according to Claim 1 wherein said first computer system is a network server.

6. The system according to Claim 1 wherein said network is a public network.

7. The system according to Claim 1 wherein said network is the Internet.

8. A method for enabling product configuration research by a respondent at a computer system over a network, said method comprising the steps of:

- a) displaying the features of a product;
- b) selecting one of said displayed features;
- c) displaying possible subfeatures for said selected feature;
- d) selecting one of said displayed subfeatures for said selected feature, in which each said subfeature associated with the feature has a price value;
- e) determining a total price based on the price value of said selected subfeature and other selected subfeatures of the product;
- f) displaying said total price value;

g) repeating steps (b), (c), (d), (e) and (f) for different selected displayed features until the selected subfeatures for each of the features provide a total price value acceptable to the respondent;

h) determining the elapse time until the selected subfeatures for each of the features provide a total price value acceptable to the respondent; and

i) sending configuration information to another computer system over the network representing at least said selected subfeatures for the features of the product, total price value, and the elapse time.

9. The method according to Claim 8 further comprising the step of maintaining a list of each of the selected subfeatures and the associated selected feature after each of the selected subfeatures are selected until the selected subfeatures for each of the features provide a total price value acceptable to the respondent, wherein said configuration information further comprises said list.

10. The method according to Claim 8 further comprising the step of storing said configuration information at said another computer system.

11. The method according to Claim 8 further comprising the steps of:
answering questions of a survey in which one or more of said questions relate to said product; and
sending the answers to said questions to said another computer system.

12. The method according to Claim 8 further comprising the steps of:
determining when one of the subfeatures selected for features of the product represent a conflict with said selected subfeatures for other features of the product;
providing a message informing the respondent when said selected subfeature represent said conflict; and
resetting the selection of the subfeature causing the conflict to avoid the conflict.

Sub A4
13. Software for enabling product configuration research executable at a computer system comprising:

- ✓ means for selecting features from a group of possible features for a product;
- ✓ means for selecting for one or more of said features, at least one subfeature from a group of possible subfeatures for the selected feature, in which each subfeature associated with the feature has a price value and said combination of at least said selected subfeatures for said features provides a total price value;
- ✓ means for displaying said total price value;
- (means for updating said displayed total price value as selected subfeatures change;
- (means for indicating that selecting subfeatures of the product is complete; and
- ✓ means for determining the elapse time between start of said selecting features step and said indicating complete step.

14. The computer program according to Claim 13 further comprising:
means for sending configuration information representing at least said selected subfeatures for the features, total price value, and elapse time to another computer system over a network; and

(means for storing said configuration information at said another computer system.

15. The computer program according to Claim 13 further comprising:
means for maintaining a list of at least each selected subfeature and associated selected feature changed, and said configuration information further comprises said list.

16. A computer system for enabling a respondent to configure a product comprising:
means for enabling a respondent to configure the product by selecting at least one subfeature for each of the features of the product, and allowing the selected subfeatures to be changed by the respondent until the product is configured with final ones of the selected subfeatures, in which each of the possible subfeatures of the features of the product has a price value;

means for determining a total price value of the product in accordance with the

Unit
be on
both
machines

selects or changes the selection of the subfeatures for each of the features of the product, and displaying said total price value;

means for determining the time for the respondent to configure the product with the final ones of said selected subfeature for each of the features of the product; and

means for determining configuration information when the respondent has configured the product having at least the final selected subfeatures for the features of the product, all selected subfeatures for the features of the product until the final ones of the selected subfeatures, and said determined time.

17. A system for enabling a respondent to configure a product over a network comprising a computer system enabling the respondent to configure a product by selecting features and subfeatures for the features of the product, recording changes in each of the selected features and subfeatures until the product is configured, and sending over the network to another computer system configuration information representative of at least the selected features and subfeatures of the product, and said recorded changes in selected features and subfeatures of the product.

18. The system according to Claim 17 wherein each said subfeature for each of the features has a price value, and said computer system determines a total price value representing a combination of the price values of each selected subfeature, and displays the total price value as subfeatures are selected or the selection of subfeatures are changed.

19. The system according to Claim 17 wherein said computer system has a timer for measuring the time for the respondent to configure the product, and said configuration information further comprises said determined time.